

They are talking about reserving \$20 billion for Medicare. In the chairman's mark they describe a reserve fund for Medicare:

Whenever the Committee on Ways and Means of the House or the Finance Committee reports a bill or an amendment or a conference report that implements the structural Medicare reform—

In other words, nothing is available for prescription drugs without comprehensive Medicare reform. I am all for Medicare reform. But I do not know why we ought to hold a good, effective prescription drug benefit program hostage until we get comprehensive Medicare reform. This is what the program requires.

Then it says:

and improves the solvency of the Medicare Program without the use of transfers or new subsidies from the general fund.

Therefore it prohibits any use of any of the surplus at a time where we have an important and significant surplus projection. The surplus should be used to assist the Medicare program in a modest way. They prohibit any use of that surplus. It also requires and ensures additional reimbursement for Medicare providers. So we have to have a comprehensive reform of the Medicare system and we have to also have the major changes for Medicare providers before we can ever come to consider the \$20 billion that is going to be recommended as possible funds that could be used for a prescription drug program. This is half of what the President of the United States has asked for, half of his \$40 million request.

This is what it says. Under the budget:

Prescription drug benefit. The adjustments made pursuant to the prescription drug benefit may be made to address the cost of prescription drugs.

It is optional. It is optional. I do not think that is what the seniors or the American people—not just seniors, but all Americans are really interested in. They want us to take action and they want us to take action now. They do not want to set up an arbitrary barricade for us before we can take action.

I do not understand why our Budget Committee is effectively binding the Senate of the United States and prohibiting it from being able to take action on a prescription drug benefit this year unless it goes through the hoops which they have established in the committee. Even if you were able to get through all those hoops, it provides woefully inadequate funding over the next 5 years.

Last year the Budget Committee had \$100 billion over 10 years for Medicare, although in reality that money was not dedicated solely to Medicare and Medicare prescription drug coverage. Yet this year they are talking about \$20 billion over 5 years. The problem has gotten worse, not better. As we have seen, even though they had their pro-

gram last year and said they are really all for prescription drug coverage, they do not have any program.

That is a very unsatisfactory way to proceed when we are talking about one of the central concerns for not only seniors but also for their families. Seniors do the best they can. So often, when the parents are unable to pay, the burden falls on other family members to chip in and help pay for mom or dad's necessary prescription drugs.

The fact is, when the Medicare system was adopted in 1965, it was to be universal in nature and have the confidence of the American people. It was a pledge to the American people—if they worked hard and played by the rules, when they retired these seniors who fought in this country's wars would be free from the dangers of absolute financial ruin due solely to their health.

We passed Social Security to provide for them to live with some sense of dignity, and Medicare was passed to give assurance that they would be able to live their golden years in with the peace, security, and dignity in knowing their health care would be covered.

At that time, only 3 percent of all private health insurance programs had a prescription benefit, so the Medicare system did not put in a prescription drug benefit. Now almost every private employer-based health plan—99 percent of them—have a prescription drug benefit. But not Medicare. This is a serious coverage gap that exists, and every senior citizen has to be concerned about this gap in coverage. It demands action.

We can develop a program this year with our current circumstances, with the economic benefits under the existing surplus. We can enact a benefit package now that can benefit seniors. We ought to pass it this year. Sure, we can phase it in, we can build it up, but we want it now. Not like the Budget Committee saying maybe sometime off in the future and giving us absolutely no assurance. That is a mistake. That is flawed policy. That is, I think, a completely inadequate response to the challenges our seniors face.

Next week, when we debate the budget, we will have the opportunity to address this issue. I hope the overwhelming majority of the Members will support an effort that will come from our side, from our leaders to commit this body to take action and take it now. We will have a chance to vote on that. It ought to be something to which every senior citizen in this country pays attention. We will make every effort to fashion a program to provide assistance to our seniors. We are committed to that. We will not be discouraged from that opportunity by these budget recommendations.

PRESIDENT HOSNI MUBARAK

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I see my friend and colleague, the good Senator from Delaware; but behind him, I see someone for whom I have great admiration, who I join in welcoming back to the United States, a dear friend to me and one of the great world leaders of our time. He is a real voice for peace in the Middle East.

I know I will not trespass on the privileges of the Chair and the ranking minority by mentioning his name, but I want him to know what a pleasure it is to see him here.

VISIT TO THE SENATE BY THE PRESIDENT OF EGYPT, HOSNI MUBARAK

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, it is my honor to present to the Senate the longtime friend of most Senators, the Honorable President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak.

RECESS

Mr. HELMS. I ask unanimous consent we stand in recess for 7 minutes.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 11:52 a.m., recessed until 12 noon; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BURNS).

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as much time as I may consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRANSPORT OF VIOLENT OFFENDERS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I intend to introduce some legislation dealing with violent crime. Before I describe that legislation, I want to speak briefly about another piece of legislation that I previously introduced called Jeanna's bill, named after an 11-year-old girl from Fargo, ND, who was brutally murdered some while ago. I will speak about that for a moment today because something has happened in the last couple of days of which we ought to be aware.

This is a picture of a man named Kyle Bell. He is a child killer. He molested children. He was sent to prison for 30 years. He was eventually convicted of killing Jeanna North from Fargo, ND, and sent off to prison.

As is too often the case in this country, Kyle Bell was remanded to the custody of a private company to transport him to a prison in some other part of America. That private transport company lost this child killer along the way. He escaped. He was not wearing red clothing or an orange jumpsuit that said: "I am a prisoner." He was in civilian clothes. He was in a van with other prisoners.